



State Jail Reform

Texas spends more than \$168 million each year locking up people for state jail felonies – in many cases for minor offenses – with a sixty-two percent re-arrest rate within three years. That is one of the worst outcomes in our criminal justice system and it is a direct result of the fact that there is little to no treatment in state jails and incarceration does nothing for this population. By shifting resources to evidence-based treatment and rehabilitation, improving incentives to choose rehabilitation, and expanding use of pretrial intervention, we can reduce prison populations and lower re-arrest rates while saving taxpayer dollars and keeping our communities safe.



Reentry Pilot Program

A pilot program to provide an educational and career and technical training program for state jail felony defendants who meet criteria was authorized in the 85th Legislative Session. The Legislative Budget Board estimates a net savings to the state of \$1,215,342 per year when the program is implemented beginning in FY 2020, but it is critical for the legislature to allocate funding for the pilot during the next budget cycle.



Reducing Occupational Licensing Barriers

Texas requires occupational licenses for more than 25 percent of professions – impacting one in three working Texans and creating especially difficult barriers for the four in ten Texans who have an arrest or conviction record. Automatic exclusions, vague disqualifying criteria, and broad criminal record inquiries have made occupational licensure difficult to obtain for individuals with criminal records. Providing stable and meaningful employment opportunities for people with a criminal record will promote economic stability, keep communities safe by reducing recidivism, and contribute to strong families. Occupational licensing reform will also increase the number of qualified workers, helping Texas maintain its vibrant economy.



Addressing the Needs of Incarcerated Women

The number of women in Texas prisons has increased 908 percent since 1980. Texas now incarcerates more women than any other state in the country. Of the more than 12,500 women in Texas prisons, 81 percent are mothers, 64 percent are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses, and nearly all have experienced victimization prior to their incarceration. They often receive inadequate access to health and hygiene services, have less access to rehabilitative programs like education, treatment, and job training than their male counterparts, and do not have their unique role as primary caretakers of children considered when it comes to sentencing or conditions of incarceration. By addressing the needs of incarcerated women and ensuring their role as primary caretakers is considered, we can better protect children and communities while reducing recidivism and costs.



The Texas Smart-On-Crime Coalition also supports:

Youth Justice Reform

Texas' current model of state secure facilities for youth is broken. These facilities are severely understaffed and out of step with best practices, resulting in dangerous conditions for youth and staff. This system is in need of a complete restructuring, including further reducing the footprint of state secure facilities and moving youth closer to home. Texas should redirect some dollars currently being spent on state secure facilities to ensure a continuum of care for youth in smaller, more therapeutic and regionalized settings. It is also critical to include raising the age of automatic adult criminal responsibility from 17 to 18 in long term planning as timelines for facility closures are developed.

Bail Reform

Too many low-income Texans are held awaiting trial because they cannot afford to pay bail. By improving screening and expanding pre-trial services, the state and local government can ensure justice for people held in jails, reduce overcrowding, and save precious public safety dollars.

Fixing the Driver Responsibility Program

While the Driver Responsibility Program (DRP) was a well-meaning idea created in 2003 to fund trauma centers, it has many unintended consequences. The reality is the DRP is making Texas more dangerous by creating severe economic hardship, putting more unlicensed drivers on the road, and limiting employment opportunities. We support efforts to reduce the pain and suffering of those impacted by the DRP.

Second Look

Youth under the age of 18 who commit certain crimes are routinely sentenced to life, with no opportunity for parole for 40 years. The U.S. Supreme court has recognized that it is wrong to deny youth who commit a crime the opportunity to demonstrate rehabilitation. Texas law should provide a path to redemption and allow a second look for those who can prove they merit a second chance.

Marijuana Reform to Class C

In Texas, more than a quarter billion dollars each year is spent enforcing marijuana possession laws, diverting taxpayer dollars away from focusing on more serious crimes, failing to reduce marijuana use and availability, crowding our jails, and ensnaring thousands of hardworking Texans in a maze of penalties and collateral consequences that harm families and communities.

Grand Jury Reform

Grand juries were initially placed in our Constitution as a safeguard against overzealous government action. Today, we have seen the grand jury system's power tilt towards prosecutors, providing little protection for those accused of crimes at this integral stage in the criminal justice system. These reforms are a common sense approach that will allow prosecutors to continue to do their jobs and protect our neighborhoods from criminals while providing protections to citizens from an overbearing government.

Asset Forfeiture Reform

Civil asset forfeiture allows the government to take your property without having charged you with a crime. Texas provides insufficient protections given the grave impact forfeiture typically has on affected individuals and businesses. Commonsense reforms in this area are easily attainable through simple procedural adjustments.